No single industry has brought more jobs to Bill Clinton's Arkansas than poultry. But most of those jobs are not worth crowing about.

ARKANSAS PECKING ORDER

By RICHARD BEHAR
SPRINGDALE

IN TOUTING HIS ECONOMIC credentials, Bill Clinton boasts that more than 200,000 jobs were created in Arkansas since he first became Governor in 1978. The claim is rightful—his state is currently No. 1 in job creation. Yet there is a downside to the Arkansas success story. As many as 20% of those new jobs were generated by just one industry: poultry. Big Chicken has become to Arkansas what microchips are to Silicon Valley and autos to Detroit. Arkansas produces 1 billion broilers a year, more than any other state. Poultry is by far the state's dominant employer, providing support for 1 of every 12 citizens.

MIKE STEWART—SYGMA

A new job in Arkansas often means hanging fowl for a crippling wage

But in nurturing this growing industry, Clinton has shown the trade-offs he would be willing to make—and tolerate—in the quest to create jobs and encourage business. Thousands of chicken growers and processing-plant workers suffer from low wages and harsh, even crippling working conditions. Their cheap labor and high productivity has enabled poultry's Pashas to enjoy explosive success in the past decade while keeping chicken prices low for consumers. In Arkansas, poultry workers are probably no worse off than their brethren in Mississippi or Georgia, but their numbers are greater, and they are increasingly angry that their share of the chicken boom is so meager. "I think the poultry industry has been a blessing and a curse for Arkansas," says Carol Tucker Foreman, a former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Agriculture and the sister of Arkansas' Lieutenant Governor. "In some places, the workers are treated very badly."

Clinton has made job creation a higher priority than the immediate quality of those jobs. The result is that he has been reluctant to challenge the state's economic giants on behalf of those who sit at the bottom of the pecking order. Clinton has sought few improvements in the industry's working conditions, while at the same time showering the largest chicken producer, Tyson Foods, with millions of dollars in tax breaks for expanding its plants and work force. It is a cozy relationship in a state where the powerful often rub elbows. Tyson has provided free airplane rides for the Governor and his wife, for both personal and business trips, and the company's chairman, Don Tyson, is a major contributor to Clinton's presidential bid. Tyson's general counsel, James Blair, is married to one of Clinton's top campaign advisers, Diane Blair. The two couples often vacation together.

Clinton's defenders dismiss the allegations that he is cavalier about the working conditions. "Bill is not insensitive to the hard, tough nature of those jobs," argues his spokeswoman, Betsey Wright. "I recall at least one brutal public piece of warfare where Bill made a comment about these near-minimum-wage jobs, and the entire poultry industry came down on our heads very hard."

The industry has grown tremendously because Americans have been forsaking pork and beef over the years and consuming far more chicken: 66 lbs. per capita last year, up from 28 lbs. in 1960. Health is not the only reason—consumers also know a bargain. At an average 88¢ per lb. for a whole broiler, chicken costs 50% less than it did three decades ago, after adjustment for inflation. One reason for the low prices is that fowl production is concentrated in poor rural areas of the South.

No company better exemplifies the industry's successes and failures than Tyson, based in Springdale, in the heart of Arkansas' poultry belt. Tyson, whose 1992 sales of $4 billion are nearly twice the size of the Arkansas state budget, produces 20% of America's chickens. Last month, after sharing a dinner of grilled chicken with a TIME reporter, vice chairman John Tyson—son of the chairman—boasted that the growth in the company's earnings per share from 1980 to 1990 ranked No. among FORTUNE 500 companies. Tot profits have increased fourteenfold in t past decade.

Very little of that bonanza has filte down to chicken-plant workers. The dustry's average pay is $7 an hour, vs for the food-processing industry whole. In Arkansas the typical wa

15-year-old sister (also pregnant) to hide his gun in a plastic bag full of baby toys. As he rode to Broward General Medical Center in Fort Lauderdale with Schanell and her mother, he told attendants that he was a friend of the family and had nothing to do with the girl's injuries.

Doctors delivered the baby by emergency caesarean. The infant took several breaths, then died; the mother survived and went home to live with her family. Knighton meanwhile slipped away from the hospital and made his way to his father's house near Pompano Beach, where he hoped to hide out for a while. But his father persuaded him to turn himself in, and the boy was charged as an adult with second-degree murder and aggravated battery. He eventually pleaded guilty to third-degree murder and in April 1991 was sentenced to four years in the Indian River Correctional Institution, a medium-security juvenile facility in Vero Beach. Last week, with a felony record, a sixth-grade education, no skills, a bus ticket and $100 from the state, Knighton left prison after serving two years.

Knighton's crime is a statistic—an isolated act in a nation where the number of those under 18 who were arrested for murder has climbed 93% over the past decade, while similar arrests among adults grew by only 10%. Among black juveniles, the murder arrest rate rose 145%, compared with 48% among whites. Police chiefs around the country point to another frightening trend: the increase in savage, senseless murders, the kind that occur over a scuffle in a school playground, a pair of sneakers, a romance gone sour. Like Anthony Knighton who pulled a gun in a squabble over a piece of change, many teenagers no longer use their fists or feet to settle disputes. Instead, they open fire.

Newspapers are so filled with reports of such crimes that all but the most horrific lose their power to shock. In Madison, Indiana, four teenage girls doused 12-year-old Shanda Sharer with gasoline and burned her alive in January because she was "trying to steal the affections of another girl." Henry ("Little Man") James, 19, opened fire into a passing car on a Washington-area interstate because he felt "like busting somebody." The somebody turned out to be a 32-year-old woman driving home from work. In Los Angeles two teenage sisters allegedly killed an elderly neighbor while another sister allegedly played a stereo to drown out the screams. They have denied all charges.

In the inner cities, where weapons are treated like household appliances, the lessons in cruelty usually start at home. Psychologist Charles Patrick Ewing, author of *When Children Who Kill,* has found that many young people committing seemingly motiveless killings were themselves sexually or physically abused. "To brutalize another human being, a youngster has to have been brutalized himself," he says. Ewing finds that teenage murderers often don't recall, or won't admit, that they were once victims. "A street tough would rather go to the gas chamber than admit to having been beaten or sodomized by a male relative."

Anthony Knighton has only vague memories of beatings by his father, a roofer who now lives in Deerfield Beach. His sharpest memories of childhood are of neglect more than fear. After his mother died when he was three, Knighton, the youngest of six children, shuttled among various relatives in Georgia and Florida. By the time he was 15, he had moved 30 times. "It seemed like nobody cared about me," he says, "so I guessed I had to do for myself." Joyce Moore, 27, a cousin who lives in Delray Beach, Florida, recalls that "people would say he could come live with them, but he better not ask for no clothes or money or nothing, 'cause they weren't gonna give it." Why should it come as a surprise, psychologists ask, that children thus passed around have a hard time developing any sense of identity or stability? A child who doesn't know where he is going to live from one month to the next is bound to stay focused on his immediate needs—like a cigarette or a new pair of shoes, no matter what it takes to get them.

IN THE INNER CITIES, WHERE WEAPONS ARE TREATED LIKE HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES, THE LESSONS IN CRUELTY USUALLY START AT HOME

KNIGHTON NEVER HAD MUCH chance of being rescued, even if someone had bothered to try. By the time he entered sixth grade, he had attended seven schools. Frank Scalise, director of guidance counseling at Deerfield Beach Middle School, said Knighton came to class only 12 days that year. Truant officers were dispatched to find him, but the family had no address. "He wasn't in school long enough for anybody to get next to him, help him or counsel him," says Scalise. "Then he dropped out, and we never saw him again."

Knighton was 14 and living with his father when he began selling crack cocaine. A year later, he was stealing cars and running a $1,000-a-day drug operation. His life savings—what he called his "bank account"—was $30,000 worth of crack and a gold Cadillac. As the boy began making big money, he became a target himself. That inspired him to get his first gun. Weapons were so plentiful that he never had to buy one but simply borrowed from friends. Openly proud of the firearms he has used, Knighton smiles fondly as he recalls each one. "When I was 14, I started out with a .25 automatic, then got me a .38 snub-nosed, then a 12-gauge shotgun, a .45 automatic and a 9-mm. But my last gun—and my best gun—was a baby Uzi."

When everyone has a gun, every argument carries the potential for deadly violence. The FBI reports that in 1990 nearly 3 out of 4 juvenile murderers used guns to commit their crimes. "A gun in the hands of a 14-year-old is much more dangerous than in the hands of a 41-year-old," says James Fox, dean of Northeastern University's College of Criminal Justice. "He has little investment in his life, and he doesn't know the meaning of death."

Knighton does know a lot about the criminal-justice system. At 16, he had been in juvenile custody 19 times, charged with aggravated assault, auto theft, robbery, drug possession, escape and contempt of court. Knighton was sent to the Better Outlook Center, a halfway house for juvenile offenders in a Miami suburb. Staff members recall Knighton as hostile and angry at first; later he began to flourish under the supervision of caring adults. "Anthony thought it was heaven," says superintendent Jounice Morris. "It was his first glimpse of stability." Morris, who gave him the nickname "Peanut," recalls that Knighton had the reading ability of a nine-year-old. She says his sister visited him only once during the months he spent at the halfway house; no other relative appeared. "It was clear he'd been passed around from pillar to post, sharing apartments with 12 or 13 other people," Morris said. "There was nobody there for him—there had never been."

After the murder, when Knighton landed in the Indian River prison, he worked on a cleanup crew six hours a day. Until state budget cuts forced the prison to eliminate its teachers' salaries, he took high school classes. Because he was considered cooperative and well behaved, Knighton had nearly two years shaved off his sentence. He does not know where his father and siblings now live, but he still keeps in touch with the staff at Better Outlook. In a letter to Morris, Knighton wrote, "I think about that baby I killed, and it hurts real bad."

Criminologists predict that the population of young offenders will explode in the decade to come. Just as crime began to surge in the late '60s, when the postwar baby-boom generation reached its teens and early 20s, the children of those baby boomers are committing their first offenses. And for many of them, pulling out a gun is just a funny game with the little girl on the corner. ■

bit lower than in such states as Virginia, Maryland and South Carolina. Production per worker in the poultry industry nearly tripled from 1960 to 1987, yet pay rose only half as fast as chicken prices did during that time, according to a 1989 report by the Institute for Southern Studies. Most chicken laborers are unskilled and barely educated; their only alternative in many cases would be a minimum-wage job.

One mid-size processor, Mark Simmons of Simmons Industries, says he is keenly aware of the problem. At Simmons' two plants in Arkansas, the starting wage is $5.70 an hour, while the average pay is just 50¢ more. "I realize it's not enough for a single mother," says Simmons sadly. "But most people have two jobs. This may be their town job, and they also work on a farm." Simmons says that with continued technological innovation, "we hope to use fewer workers and pay them more."

Frances Ketcher, 63, doesn't have much longer to wait. She has been employed at a Simmons plant for 24 years, a remarkably long time in an industry where employee turnover often reaches 100% a year. She earns only $6.10 an hour. "To work here you need a weak mind and a strong back," she says with a smile. The pace at the Simmons plant is so frantic that chickens sometimes spill onto the floor, where they lie for as long as an hour. "Sometimes there's a real pile-up," says Grover Myers, a federal inspector at the plant since 1959. "I just wish the plant supervisors had their own initiative, without inspectors telling them to pick up the chicken and rewash it."

MOST POULTRY PLANTS ARE cramped and noisy, with floors constantly wet and slippery. Some rooms are cold, others hot and malodorous enough to bring a visitor close to vomiting. Employees are sometimes splashed with feces, blood, guts or chicken fat. Even more odious is the industry's rising injury rate. Labor Department statistics show that 27% of poultry workers suffer on-the-job injuries and illnesses each year, making fowl processing one of the nation's most hazardous jobs. In terms of repetitive-motion disorders, poultry work is exceeded only by meat packing. In a study by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 1 in 3 chicken workers was found to have a work-related muscu-lar-skeletal disorder resulting in moder-ate or extreme pain. Many employees be-come permanently disabled.

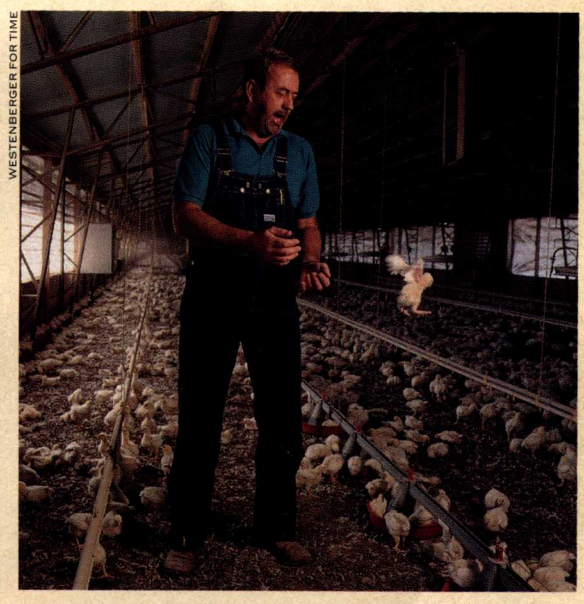
Some companies, including Tyson, are esponding to the crisis by implementing b rotation, better knife designs, and sture-improvement programs. But alth experts say the industry will not big results until the work pace is ed down. The assembly line typically s carcasses past the workers at a rate

THEO WESTENBERGER FOR TIME

Workers For the Duvalls, who live in the central Arkansas town of Russellville, the chicken industry has supported life at the subsistence level—and no better. They own a dilapidated house, in which a few chairs are scattered about on unsanded plywood floors. After 20 years of low-paid work, Thomas Duvall, 50 and disabled by emphysema, quit his job at a nearby Tyson Foods plant last March. He has no savings to rely on.

His wife Nettie, 46, left her $6.09-an-hour job at Tyson in 1990 because the work caused unbearable pain in her hands. She spent most of her 14 years at the plant pulling the intestines out of chickens. Today, despite three operations, she no longer has any grip. "The supervisors just got so nasty to me that I finally quit," she says. "They would tell me to do work that I just couldn't do."

Nettie settled a workers compensation case for just $5,000. "As long as the birds go down the line, they don't care about your hands," she says. "Ever since Tyson bought the plant [in 1984], they've been treating us like machines." Nettie claims the pace at the plant grew so intense that workers routinely tossed filthy birds onto the line when federal inspectors weren't looking—a practice other workers say continues today. Tyson strongly denies that it does.

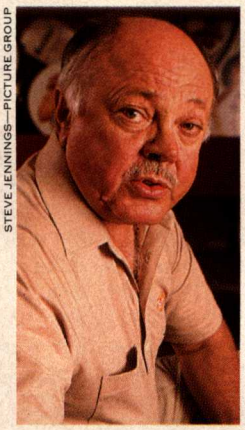


WESTENBERGER FOR TIME

Growers In the 11 years that Billy Wayne Johnson has been growing chickens full time for Tyson Foods in Gravette, Arkansas, his expenses have risen 50%, but the price the processor pays him has remained flat at about 4¢ per lb. As a result, his business earns just $15,000 annually, before taxes. He still hasn't paid off the mortgage on his four chicken houses and is sometimes late with the payments. To make ends meet, last year he began selling pine shavings to processors, who use the material for chicken bedding. Earlier this year, Johnson learned that Arkansas growers were overcoming their fears of retaliation and starting to organize to demand a better deal. Johnson wants to join the group but claims he was warned by a Tyson serviceman about repercussions. "He said, 'You do a lot of business with us. Now, we can make it good or we can make it bad.' I told him it was against the law for him to talk this way. So he said, 'Well, it's your word against ours.' " A Tyson spokesman says employees "are under instructions not to" harass farmers who try to organize. What worries Johnson is that Tyson may be more than willing to drop him, since many other growers would be willing to have his job, despite its hardships.

of 70 to 90 birds a minute. Many employees perform repetitive motions on every other bird at the rate of one every two seconds. "We are pushing workers to produce more and more, and failing to design their work stations properly," says David Cochran, a University of Nebraska ergonomist who has studied poultry plants. "It's just not right to put someone in a job where you know there's a high probability they will become disabled."

The industry relies on a constant stream of fresh labor; many employees quit within a year because they have become injured or disgruntled. At the Tyson plant in Dardanelle (pop. 3,722), workers complain that the lines have sped up, real salaries have declined, older injured workers are sometimes forced to quit and 30% to 50% of the employees have some form of repetitive-motion disorder. (The company's official estimate for its overall work force is 2% to 3%.) Workers also dispute Tyson's reported injury rate, which is one-fourth the industry average and is based on lost workdays. Labor officials claim that plant supervisors pressure injured workers to quit or show up for "light duty." Tyson fiercely disputes those allegations.



STEVE JENNINGS—PICTURE GROUP

The company, led by poultry king Don Tyson, claims the disorder rate is closer to 3%

At the Tyson Foods plant in Dardanelle, many workers complain that 30% to 50% of the employees have some form of repetitive-motion disorder

WORKERS PORTRAY A grim picture of their daily routine. "If you asked everyone who hated this place to step outside, you'd clear the entire plant, and maybe half the supervisors too," says Travis Coe, 21, a floor-jack operator with a pregnant wife and a second job as a construction worker. Chris Turic, a colleague, says his fingers sometimes lock up so badly, he has to pry them open. Turic, 30, suffers from a repetitive-motion illness that he says is the result of his job as a "backup killer" at Dardanelle for the past nine years. Specifically, Turic uses a long knife to whack the necks of any chickens that are missed by a circular saw. By day's end he is often covered with feces and blood. For this he gets about $7.10 an hour, more than most workers—because, as John Tyson explains, "the messier the job, the more the pay." The last time Turic complained about his fingers, he says, he was given even heavier work scrubbing down rooms. "You get punished for getting hurt," he says. "Supervisors who treat people well don't last."

For the 6,000 farmers who raise rather than process the fowl, the main problem is not safety but low pay. Says Anita Scates, a single parent and grower for Arkansas-based Hudson Foods: "You worry about making your monthly bills. You smell like a chicken all the time. It's a full-time job and a rough life. I bring in around $45,000 and, after expenses, earn about $12,000 to $15,000."

The traditional agreement that binds the growers to the processors makes the farmers virtual serfs on their own land. The processors supply the farmers with chicks, feed, medicine and transportation of the chickens. The growers must provide chicken houses, labor and equipment, and pay all other expenses. The deal brings farmers about 4¢ per lb. of chicken, which is less than they received 30 years ago, after adjustment for inflation.

Growers say that when they complain about the arrangement, the processors sometimes retaliate by terminating the relationship. Other growers say they have been penalized by processors who underweigh their chickens or give them ailing chicks to raise. In a trial in Arkansas last June, a former manager for Cargill, a major turkey producer, testified that "if you've got [a grower] you've just had it with, you might give him the bad [birds] just so he'd quit." Despite the testimony, the grower was unable to prove his case.

So far, neither growers nor plant workers had found much success in organizing or in finding powerful advocates. "The workers didn't feel they could organize and maintain their jobs, because many plants have an economic stranglehold on their towns," says Kelly Mitchell-Clark, an official of the Women's Project, a nonprofit group in Little Rock that conducted a study of the state's poultry belt. "Sometimes it's a big deal for these people just to be able to get off the processing line to go to the bathroom."

Fewer than 10% of Arkansas poultry plants are unionized. The main impediment to organizers is high job turnover, which means that most employees are new and feel fortunate just to have a job. When asked about the absence of unions in all but two of his 23 Arkansas plants, John Tyson says this is the desire of the workers. "In 1984 we bought a plant in Dardanelle," he points out. "Last year 80% of the workers signed a petition to get rid of the union. They just didn't want it." But in July a judge overturned the decertification of the Dardanelle union because the employee who led the drive was an "agent" of Tyson who "threatened" new hires into signing the petition. In a stinging 44-page decision, Judge Wallace Nations concluded that the company's main witnesses were "not credible." Tyson has appealed the decision. "The union is the only hope these people have of achieving any dignity and a decent wage," argues Bill Burns, an official with the United Food and Commercial Workers. "Just try to raise a family on $6.25 an hour. It's impossible."

Growers too have been frustrated after decades of attempting to organize. But a year ago, 35 growers from nine states met in a hunting lodge in the Arkansas Ozarks and launched a national group. Since then, hundreds of farmers in Arkansas alone have signed on, many of them paying dues anonymously. "Yes, I'm afraid," says grower Don Allen, a leader of the Arkansas movement. "And that's a terrible thing to say in the land of the free and the home of the brave." Last February a Tyson memo to managers urged them to spread the word that the organizing was being led by "shady characters" such as socialists and animal-rights activists.

None of this agitation seems to trouble poultry's millionaires, who include James ("Red") Hudson, the affable 68-year-old chairman of Hudson Foods (1991 sales: $765 million). During an interview, Hudson invited a reporter into his Mercedes for a tour of his country club. "The poultry industry is the greatest example of the free-enterprise system on earth. We should be applauded for our economics," he declared, noting the low price of chicken. Reminded that his state's per capita income is $14,600, he exclaimed, "I'd be shocked if anyone in our company was making that little." But Hudson's own plant in the town of Hope—where Bill Clinton grew up—starts laborers at $5.90 an hour, or less than $12,300 a year.

During the campaign, the Republicans have accused Clinton of being biased against business and too partial toward government regulations. But if he wins the presidency on a pledge to create jobs across America the way he did in Arkansas, his real challenge may be to make sure that those jobs are better, safer and more lucrative than the ones he nurtured as a Governor.

Washington (D.C.) Post March 22, 1992

In Arkansas, the Game Is Chicken

Clinton's Critics Say His Ties to Poultry Industry Cost the State

By David Maraniss
and Michael Weisskopf
Washington Post Staff Writers

SPRINGDALE, Ark.—Don Tyson kills 25 million chickens a week on his assembly lines, 10 times as many birds as there are people in Arkansas. The annual revenue of his firm, Tyson Foods, the largest in the state's dominant industry, is twice the size of the Arkansas budget. Those figures alone help explain a key equation in the state that Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton has governed for 11 years: Chickens equal political power.

Nowhere is that connection more evident than here in the rolling hills of northwest Arkansas, where Tyson is president of a $4 billion family business that is the world's leading chicken processing company. It is somehow fitting that Tyson, a colorful Arkansas character who wears a khaki uniform on the job, works in a suite precisely resembling the one Clinton yearns to occupy, a replica of the Oval Office with a desk modeled after Thomas Jefferson's.

The boom years for Tyson the chicken magnate parallel Clinton's time as a governor consumed with the cause of economic growth for his rural, impoverished state. How Clinton has dealt with Tyson and the powerful poultry industry during those years reveals much about the style and the substance of his five terms as governor.

It would be an overstatement to say that Clinton and Tyson could not have succeeded without each other—for the most part their relationship has been of mutual benefit, helping Tyson expand his operations and Clinton ascend politically.

But critics of Clinton say the relationship has had serious costs for the state he governs, both to its environment and to the middle-class taxpayers who live with an inequitable tax system that gives breaks to industry while imposing sales taxes on such necessities as food.

And in a campaign where Clinton calls himself "an agent for change," his relationship with Tyson and the poultry industry reveals a more traditional figure, a governor comfortable with the cozy, one-of-the-boys interplay between big business and government, more interested in accommodation than confrontation, sometimes hesitant to challenge the state's entrenched economic interests.

In his desire to improve the economic climate, Clinton during the past decade has used tax breaks, development grants and at times lenient environmental regulations to turn the state into a comfort zone for industry, including some of the heaviest polluters.

Tyson alone received $7.8 million in tax breaks for expanding its existing plants and work force from 1988 to 1990, according to state records. Whether the assistance the Clinton administration gave Tyson had any impact on the company's decisions to expand is debatable.

When Tyson was deciding whether to build a new $40 million processing plant in Pine Bluff, the Clinton administration gave the city a $900,000 grant to build new roads and improve the infrastructure at the proposed site and granted Tyson tax credits for bringing new jobs to the area. Wally Gieringer, director of the Pine Bluff industrial foundation, said the governor's role was crucial.

"Without his approval and without his direct contact with the company on our behalf, I question whether we would have landed the plant," Gieringer said.

But John Tyson, Don Tyson's son and the poultry company's vice president, said in a recent interview that the tax breaks and infrastructure grant had nothing to do with the company's decision to locate in Pine Bluff rather than out of state. "It was based purely on geography," Tyson said. "Pine Bluff was in the right place. The tax credits didn't make any difference."

In an interview last week, Clinton said he was obsessed during that period with creating jobs. "The unemployment rate was high [about 9 percent]," he said. "I was concerned with putting people back to work."

His approach helped lower the jobless rate and paid important political dividends for him as well. Tyson Foods has provided free airplane rides for the governor and his wife, and its executives have helped him with thousands of dollars in campaign contributions and industry fund-raising efforts that fueled Clinton's reelection campaigns and his race for president.

"You've got to support the governor," Don Tyson said in a recent interview. "The family has donated to Bill and as an industry we're raising our fair share. I think we've all maxed out on him"—meaning members of the Tyson family had all contributed the federal limit of $1,000.

The easy play between poultry leaders and the governor does not sit as well, however, with the families who feel they have been victimized by the pollution caused by chicken waste. Nearly half of the 600 miles of streams in the northwest part of Arkansas where the poultry industry is centered are considered so polluted by chicken and livestock waste that they are off-limits to swimming.

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Virtually every tributary of the White River, a world-class trout stream in the heart of the Ozarks vacationland, is contaminated by fecal coliform, and many by nitrates, threatening the drinking water supply for 300,000 people, according to officials at the state's Pollution Control and Ecology Department. In five northwestern counties, chickens produce 500,000 tons of waste, known as litter, each year—equivalent to the output of 4 million people.

Brownie Ledbetter, director of the Arkansas Public Policy Project, said the governor's attitude toward poultry companies and other big industries seems rooted in the cozy traditions of old-style southern politics.

"The corporate folks have dominated this state economically and politically since it was a territory. That is not Bill's fault," Ledbetter said. "What bothers me is he has amassed so much political capital over the years that he could use to change things, but he hasn't used it. He's just following the great southern economic development plan—come to us, we have cheap wages, few unions, all the tax breaks you could want and lousy environmental regulations."

In response to such charges, Clinton said he has tried to balance the state's economic needs with environmental safeguards. He noted that in the same year that he pushed a series of manufacturing tax credits through the legislature, he also signed into law measures allowing the state to impose fines on polluters without going through the courts.

Big Business in State

While razorbacks is the nickname for the University of Arkansas' sports teams, chickens, not hogs, are the dominant animal in this state. The poultry industry accounts for more than half of Arkansas' agricultural value, one of every 12 private jobs, 18 percent of the grower chicks nationwide and more than half of the fast-food chicken products in the world. Tyson Foods alone uses as much water each day as the city of Atlanta. The industry as a whole is the state's leading user of utilities, trucks and paper products.

"Poultry," said Don Allen, director of the Arkansas Poultry Federation, "is to Arkansas what steel was to Pittsburgh."

The scene in Little Rock during legislative sessions leaves little doubt about the poultry lobby's clout. The federation's headquarters, known as "The Chicken House," is a favored hideout for state lawmakers after adjournment each day, a place where they shoot the bull while devouring chicken wings and deviled eggs. Allen said Clinton "drops by now and then."

The chicken connection is symbolized by the fact that a legislator, Sen. Joe Yates (R), is on the payroll of the poultry federation as director of industrial relations. Six lawmakers last year were guests of the federation for an all-expenses-paid golf outing out of state, state ethics records show, and four more were hosted by Don Tyson at a marlin-fishing vacation in Mexico.

Clinton and his wife, Hillary, have been treated to free airplane transportation by Tyson on nine occasions since 1989—eight recorded as business trips and one as personal.

There are no state laws proscribing Clinton's acceptance of such corporate largess, and Clinton said he has no qualms about the situation, which one of his aides described as "corporate hitchhiking." The governor's office does not have a plane of its own, Clinton said, adding: "Buying an airplane for the state of Arkansas has never been a political or budgetary option." As long as the trips are reported, Clinton said, "I do not think it is inappropriate."

James B. Blair, the Tyson Foods general counsel listed as the host for two of Clinton's trips, is Tyson's key connection to the governor. He and his wife, University of Arkansas political science professor Diane Blair, a Clinton campaign adviser, are longtime friends of the Clintons. The couples regularly vacation together at the Blair's summer cottage. In 1985, Clinton appointed Blair to the University of Arkansas board of directors, a state panel that he now chairs while also working for Tyson.

Asked whether he saw any appearance of conflict of interest in his relationship with Blair and Blair's dealings with the state, Clinton offered a one-word answer: "No." His press secretary, Mike Gauldin, was more expansive on the question.

"The thing in Arkansas that you keeping running into is that it's such a small state, a small town, really, that everybody knows everybody else; there is always a connection," Gauldin said. "Our feeling is that everybody knows Jim is Bill's close friend and that he works for Tyson and is on the university board, and as long as everyone knows it, there can't be anything secret or sinister going on."

Environmental Problems

The growth of the Arkansas poultry business has created problems potentially as large as its profits. Oceans of contaminated water used in plants where the birds are killed, plucked and packaged, for example, are chemically treated to varying degrees of cleanliness and then discharged directly into streams or municipal treatment plants.

But a greater environmental threat is caused by the way chicken farmers empty their cages and dump dry litter on cropland. Some farms in the state have become so saturated that new loadings of litter lie on the surface and quickly wash into streams. As a result, the streams are often teeming with fecal bacteria. More ominous is the presence in the water of high levels of nitrates known to cause blue baby syndrome. Nitrates also spawn algae, which reacts with chlorine in treated drinking water and can create cancer-causing byproducts.

The problem of poultry waste has exploded in recent years—and tested Clinton's political will.

Even his critics concede that he has taken on the chicken barons more forcefully than any previous Arkansas governor. State regulators have written discharge permits for major chicken processors and forced the modernization of municipal treatment facilities to handle the heavy flow of plant wastes. As the state stepped up enforcement of pollution limits, Tyson Foods spent about $50 million on pollution controls for its plants in the state. In 1990, Clinton convened a task force to recommend ways of protecting streams and ground water from poultry litter.

But the critics say the reality of Clinton's program does not live up to his rhetoric. His administration spent relatively little to upgrade municipal plants and failed to enforce permit requirements of seri-

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ous polluters. The task force, heavily weighted with industry members and supporters—and, in fact, reconstituted by Clinton from an in-house industry panel—has spent two years studying the problem of chicken litter without recommending a single remedy.

"The governor is a politician who likes to tell everybody what they want to hear," said Sam Ledbetter [no relation to Brownie], an environmental lawyer in Little Rock. "But we're in the process of losing our surface waters in northwest Arkansas because of the poultry industry, and he hasn't said what we're going to do to clean it up."

One of Clinton's most telling encounters with the ecological dangers of poultry waste involved a Tyson Foods processing plant in Green Forest, a hamlet 65 miles from here near the Missouri border.

The problem originated years before Clinton first became governor in 1979 when the plant discharged such heavy volumes of waste into the town's treatment facility that it overflowed, allowing raw sewage to enter Dry Creek, which serves as a drainage ditch for the facility.

The state pollution control agency knew of the creek's fragile state—its limestone floor was prone to sink. But after Green Forest officials made some improvements in sewage treatment, the agency re-licensed the facility in 1977 on condition that the town reach an agreement with Tyson to partially treat its wastes.

By the time Clinton entered office, Green Forest already was proving unable to handle Tyson's sewage load. The chicken plant accounted for 90 percent of the town's waste in the late 1970s and was growing rapidly. As the treatment facility became overloaded, town officials borrowed Tyson's equipment to siphon off sludge and dump it on local fields, according to a lawsuit filed by residents.

But despite the known risks of a sinkhole opening in Dry Creek, state officials did not enforce the original 1977 permit requirement that Tyson pre-treat waste before sending it to the Green Forest facility. No fines were issued, no legal action was taken to shut down the Tyson plant or the treatment facility, and no pleas for federal help were made by Arkansas authorities.

The worst fears came true in May 1983, shortly after Clinton was elected governor for the second time. A sinkhole developed in Dry Creek, and through it partially treated sewage from the Tyson plant drained into the ground water at the rate of 1 million gallons a day.

Many residents of the low-income farming town drew their water from household wells and developed chronic dysentery. Steve Work, who owns a gift shop outside Green Forest, was told by a doctor that his symptoms resembled salmonella, a bacteria that can be transmitted by poultry. Work also noticed globs of grease in his drinking water. But he did not connect his illness to the ground water until an aquifer on a neighbor's property turned septic a year later, killing hundreds of fish in the once pristine spring.

"The buzzards were camped right below the stream. We went down to investigate and it smelled like sewage," he recalled recently. "If those fish hadn't died, I believe I would have."

A 'Disaster Emergency'

As Tyson Foods continued to overload the treatment system, state health officials documented the contamination of residential wells in the summer of 1984, and finally got Clinton to declare a state of "disaster emergency" in October—17 months after a section of Dry Creek's floor had collapsed and sucked in pollution.

Most residents were eventually put on a city water line, and the issue disappeared from the governor's agenda—except for an unusual effort by Blair, the Tyson Foods counsel, to drag his friend the governor into a fight with state health department officials in 1987.

The officials had raised concerns that Tyson was dumping sludge from its Green Forest plant near the sources for some of the town's drinking water. Writing the state health director in May 1987, Blair noted that the location had been approved by the pollution control agency and suggested a "major meeting in the governor's office" to "get the turf problems ironed out."

The meeting never took place, according to Sam Ledbetter, the attorney in the case, and Tyson eventually stopped dumping the sludge. Blair did not return telephone calls to discuss the letter.

For Clinton, Green Forest showed the potential for trouble posed by chicken waste, a lesson in the politics of pollution. In May 1990, he appeared to get out front on the issue by convening the Animal Waste Task Force to recommend controls. But his appointments were so weighted in favor of industry and the agencies that regulate it that the prospect of real reform was "virtually doomed from the start," said Larry Snodgrass, one of three environmentalists on the 28-member panel.

The task force put aside chicken litter issues to focus on the less prevalent problem of liquid livestock waste. The proposal it submitted in January was less stringent in part than the voluntary measures promoted by the state in recent years. A subcommittee, headed by a poultry executive, will determine whether controls on litter should be voluntary.

In Don Tyson's oak-paneled suite, the symbiosis of politics and business is elevated to an art form. Appointing the stately replica of the Oval Office is poultry paraphernalia—shiny brass doorknobs shaped like eggs, bronzed egg cartons in sculpture and a chicken head carved in the fireplace.

"I think Bill will make us a darn good president or I wouldn't support him," said the bantam-sized chicken tycoon. With the understated style that allows him to attribute his multibillion-dollar empire to luck, Tyson added about his relationship with Clinton: "Sometimes if I call him, he'll answer the call."

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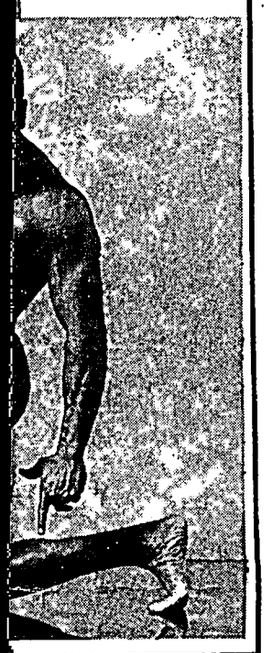
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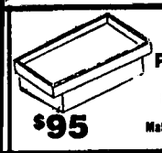
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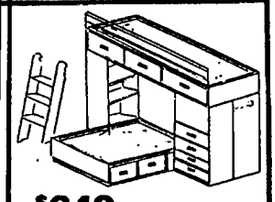
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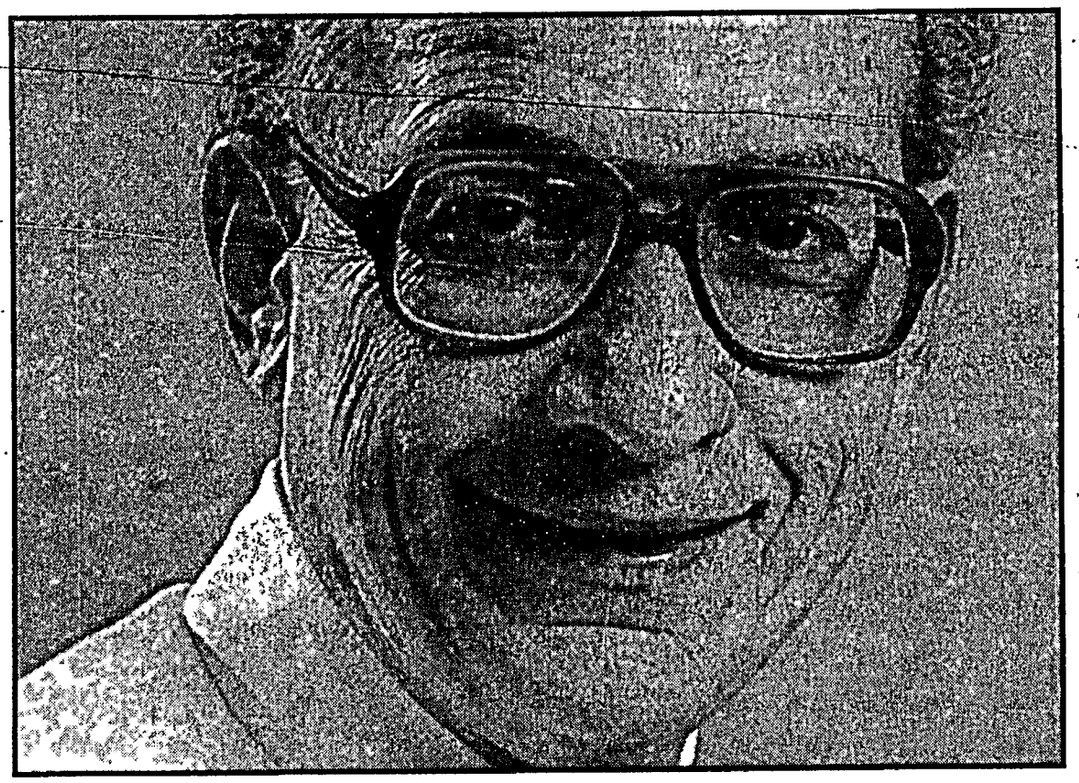

Paul Greenberg, editorial director of the *Pine Bluff Commercial*, a longtime observer of Bill Clinton

The Al D'Amato of Arkansas

After more than a decade under his leadership, Arkansas still has no civil rights bill, making it one of only two states in the Union without such legislation. The last time one was proposed, it was referred to a committee—inevitably called a Task Force in Clintonspeak. The bill is still there.

—Paul Greenberg, *Pine Bluff Commercial*, a daily newspaper in Arkansas, March 4, 1992

In the March 23 *Newsweek*, it was reported that "despite his outward confidence," the Democrats' bonny, bulging front-runner "has developed a private brittleness about the [continuing] scrutiny, joking bitterly about journalists who have 'crawled my ass' in search of stories to write."

Well, there are limits to what I will do to fulfill the public's need to know, and in the case of Slick Willie all I have to do is look at the public record. So his ass—if not his integrity—is safe from me.

For much of what follows, I am indebted to Paul Greenberg, editorial director of the *Pine Bluff Commercial* and a Pulitzer prize–winner for editorials on civil rights in 1969, when a Southern journalist still ran the risk of stirring up more than verbal hostility by writing about discrimination against blacks.

For years, Greenberg has been among those journalists—Murray Kempton, William Raspberry, Tony Lewis, Mary McGrory, and Tony Mauro—whom I particularly respect and learn from.

Greenberg, a longtime chronicler of the governor of Arkansas—whom William Faulkner might well have recognized as an especially phosphorescent member of the Snopes family—has been very generous in providing me some of his pieces on the South's most renowned soft-shoe dancer.

At the beginning, I asked Greenberg if it would be fair for me to write that Clinton is sometimes disingenuous.

"I would leave out the 'sometimes,'" Greenberg said.

Let us start with the barefaced shamelessness of Slick and Sweet Willie. From a Paul Greenberg editorial of October 13, 1991:

"'I want to lead the way,' said Bill Clinton as he opened his presidential campaign, 'because that's what we've tried to do in Arkansas. We've balanced our budget every year and we're improving services.'"

Isn't that special? Paul Greenberg pointed out in the same column that "under Arkansas's Revenue Stabilization Act, no governor of that state has a choice in the matter. It would have been illegal for Clinton *not* to have balanced the budget. For the past 40 years, *every* governor of Arkansas has balanced the budget."

Greenberg also noted that Clinton, at the same time, was announcing budget cuts. Okay, he's not the only governor who's had to do that. But "about $2.4 million may be lost Services. It took a lawsuit before Clinton moved to revamp that operation after a series of scandalous stories about abused children in foster care. That didn't keep him from saying in his announcement for president: 'It is our ability to take care of our own at home that gives us the strength to stand up for what we believe around the world.'"

If Pinocchio had been saying what Clinton has on the campaign trail, his nose would have preceded him by many miles. But look at how Clinton has attracted labor leaders around the country to his banner. The banner is a Chameleon Rampant. They flock to Clinton despite the governor's noxious labor record. They will overdose on promises.

Arkansas is a right-to-work state. That means there can be no union shop. In an open shop, workers are serfs. Through the years, here and in Boston, I helped organize three union shops. I was a worker in all of them. Before the union, the boss could—and did—do whatever the hell he wanted. Split shifts (four hours in the morning at one place I worked, and five hours that night). And the kind of pre-union pay that made a stop at a White Tower (the McDonald's of those days) a treat. And, of course, we could be fired at will, and instantly.

But is Bill Clinton anti-union? How could he be with all those union leaders getting out the vote for him? Paul Greenberg explored that question in the January 24 *Pine Bluff Commercial*. The narrative reveals a lot about Revolving Willie:

"Speaking of evasions, did you catch Slick Willie's threesquare stand in New Hampshire on the Right-to-Work? 'I would not vote to put it in any place that doesn't have it, because I think it sends the wrong signal. This signal it sends is, we want to do whatever we can to keep wages down, and that's not the signal we want to send.'"

But should Arkansas now repeal its right-to-work law?

"'I'm not going to tell people in my state or any state that they don't have the right to make the decision there,' said Clinton."

Child labor? Yellow Dog contracts (you get fired if you join a union)? A law stipulating that employers are under no obligation to provide medical benefits? Let each state decide what it wants to do, says the candidate of much of organized labor.

Back to Paul Greenberg and Clinton's support of working men and women during that press conference in New Hampshire.

"Back in 1976, Bill Clinton was for Right to Work in Arkansas, now he's against it in New Hampshire." ("I think it sends the wrong signal," says Willie.)

"Of course, back then he was running for attorney general in a right-to-work state, and now he's running for president in a recession. Slick Willie is nothing if not flexible; he's not about to offend a single voter in New Hampshire,

There's more. "So where does the governor stand on the Right-to-Work? [Clinton says,] 'You're asking me to answer a question that has nothing to do with the issue before us today. The issue before us today is how we get wages and productivity up, and I gave you the only answer I'm going to give you.'

"The governor's 'stand' on this issue isn't so much liberal or conservative as invertebrate."

There's still more. Greenberg told me that the Arkansas Industrial Development Commission—which, says Greenberg, Clinton has regularly appeased—used to try to attract outside industry by advertising Arkansas as a "low wage" state. The governor asked the commission to change that a bit and advertise Arkansas as a "right to work" state. It's such an easy code word to understand. They mean the same thing: Screw the workers.

Paul Greenberg invented the entirely apt sobriquet "Slick Willie"—although his first version was "Willie Slick." Turned around, it became common currency among those Clinton-watchers in Arkansas who were not in big law firms or other institutions of the ruling class.

The farther Slick Willie gets from home, the more he becomes a magical quick-change artist. Why, there has never been a more passionate defender of civil rights. He'll go into a black church and speak rhetoric in rhymes. (I wonder how long that took to rehearse?)

Jesse Jackson isn't fooled, however. He was on Chicago television the night Clinton won that state big, including most of those black voters who came out. Jackson didn't mention any names, but he noted that people running way up high keep talking about the middle class. As if that were the only class in need of help.

What about the poor in Rhyming Willie's Arkansas? Bill Clinton, writes Greenberg, "has been billing himself as The Champion of the Middle Class." That's the presidential candidate. Then there's Bill Clinton, the governor, "whose regressive taxes have squeezed" both the middle class and the poor in Arkansas, which "remains one of only 18 [states] in the Union that collects a sales tax on food and clothing. And that tax has been climbing and climbing during the Clinton years."

Paul Greenberg says that Willie is so slick that there is "no real Bill Clinton." Well, the *real* Bill Clinton is Willie Slick. The governor gets very angry when he hears "slick" attached, like a fungus, to his name. He should. He knows what he's done.

In the March 19 *Wall Street Journal*, David Shribman reported that "in 1983 Mr. Clinton worked for the legislature's support in raising the sales tax to 4 per cent from 3 per cent. The Arkansas Fairness Council, a coalition of labor groups, blacks, women's organizations, and others, asked him to exempt food from the sales tax. He refused. The coalition then suggested a rebate for low-income tax payers, which Mr. Clinton accepted so as to get the penny increase through the House.

Meredith Oakley, associate editor of the *Arkansas Democrat*, says of Bill Clinton: "His word is dirt."

"But when the legislation got to the Senate, Mr. Clinton reneged on his agreement, the group contends. 'We counted on him,' says Brownie Ledbetter, president of the council. 'We stood there and watched while he broke his word. It happened whiz-bang.' "

And J. Bill Becker, president of the AFL-CIO of Arkansas, told Shribman: "I have never dealt with a governor like that. He's your friend, but when you go to the legislature, you get no help at all. People call him Slick Willie because he will tell people what they want to hear and then evade and avoid and explain away."

When Clinton announced that he was going to run for the presidency, Meredith Oakley, the associate editor of the *Arkansas Democrat*, started a column on that celebratory day by saying of Bill Clinton: "His word is dirt."

There'll be more next week about the most repellent major presidential candidate I have seen since Richard Nixon ran against the Bill of Rights in 1968. (Recent Supreme Court decisions, said Nixon, had "weakened law and encouraged criminals.") But at least Nixon never pretended to give a damn about unconstitutional searches and seizures, nor had he ever opposed secret FBI surveillance of people exercising their First Amendment rights. Nixon was disgusting, but he was not in Slick Willie's class as a hypocrite, an authentic whited sepulchur.

Yet, throughout this city, some of our beacons of civil liberties and economic justice—including labor leaders!—are embracing Willie Slick.

It is time to be realistic, we are told, so that we can, at last, elect a Democratic president. Above all else, what stays in my mind is Rickey Ray Rector, a man whose brain was so shattered that he didn't know what was going on at his trial. Willie executed him during the primaries to show that not all Democrats are wimps on crime.

I've voted for people I had little use for, but never for

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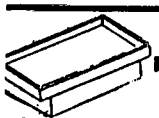
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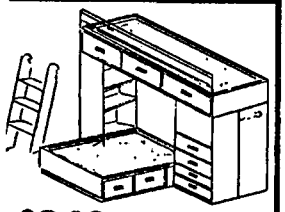
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"I would leave out the 'sometimes,'" Greenberg said.

Let us start with the barefaced shamelessness of Slick and Sweet Willie. From a Paul Greenberg editorial of October 13, 1991:

"'I want to lead the way,' said Bill Clinton as he opened his presidential campaign, 'because that's what we've tried to do in Arkansas. We've balanced our budget every year and we're improving services.'"

Isn't that special? Paul Greenberg pointed out in the same column that "under Arkansas's Revenue Stabilization Act, no governor of that state has a choice in the matter. It would have been illegal for Clinton *not* to have balanced the budget. For the past 40 years, *every* governor of Arkansas has balanced the budget."

Greenberg also noted that Clinton, at the same time, was announcing budget cuts. Okay, he's not the only governor who's had to do that. But "about $2.4 million may be lost to the long neglected Division of Children and Family to take care of our own at home that gives us the strength to stand up for what we believe around the world.'"

If Pinocchio had been saying what Clinton has on the campaign trail, his nose would have preceded him by many miles. But look at how Clinton has attracted labor leaders around the country to his banner. The banner is a Chameleon Rampant. They flock to Clinton despite the governor's noxious labor record. They will overdose on promises.

Arkansas is a right-to-work state. That means there can be no union shop. In an open shop, workers are serfs. Through the years, here and in Boston, I helped organize three union shops. I was a worker in all of them. Before the union, the boss could—and did—do whatever the hell he wanted. Split shifts (four hours in the morning at one place I worked, and five hours that night). And the kind of pre-union pay that made a stop at a White Tower (the McDonald's of those days) a treat. And, of course, we could be fired at will, and instantly.

But is Bill Clinton anti-union? How could he be with all those union leaders getting out the vote for him? Paul Greenberg explored that question in the January 24 *Pine Bluff Commercial*. The narrative reveals a lot about Revolving Willie:

"Speaking of evasions, did you catch Slick Willie's threesquare stand in New Hampshire on the Right-to-Work? 'I would not vote to put it in any place that doesn't have it, because I think it sends the wrong signal. This signal it sends is, we want to do whatever we can to keep wages down, and that's not the signal we want to send.'"

But should Arkansas now repeal its right-to-work law?

"'I'm not going to tell people in my state or any state that they don't have the right to make the decision there,' said Clinton."

Child labor? Yellow Dog contracts (you get fired if you join a union)? A law stipulating that employers are under no obligation to provide medical benefits? Let each state decide what it wants to do, says the candidate of much of organized labor.

Back to Paul Greenberg and Clinton's support of working men and women during that press conference in New Hampshire.

"Back in 1976, Bill Clinton was for Right to Work in Arkansas, now he's against it in New Hampshire." ("I think it sends the wrong signal," says Willie.)

"Of course, back then he was running for attorney general in a right-to-work state, and now he's running for president in a recession. Slick Willie is nothing if not flexible; he's not about to offend a single voter in New Hampshire, Arkansas, or anywhere else."

Paul Greenberg invented the entirely apt sobriquet "Slick Willie"—although his first version was "Willie Slick." Turned around, it became common currency among those Clinton-watchers in Arkansas who were not in big law firms or other institutions of the ruling class.

The farther Slick Willie gets from home, the more he becomes a magical quick-change artist. Why, there has never been a more passionate defender of civil rights. He'll go into a black church and speak rhetoric in rhymes. (I wonder how long that took to rehearse?)

Jesse Jackson isn't fooled, however. He was on Chicago television the night Clinton won that state big, including most of those black voters who came out. Jackson didn't mention any names, but he noted that people running way up high keep talking about the middle class. As if that were the only class in need of help.

What about the poor in Rhyming Willie's Arkansas? Bill Clinton, writes Greenberg, "has been billing himself as The Champion of the Middle Class." That's the presidential candidate. Then there's Bill Clinton, the governor, "whose regressive taxes have squeezed" both the middle class and the poor in Arkansas, which "remains one of only 18 [states] in the Union that collects a sales tax on food and clothing. And that tax has been climbing and climbing during the Clinton years."

Paul Greenberg says that Willie is so slick that there is "no real Bill Clinton." Well, the *real* Bill Clinton is Willie Slick. The governor gets very angry when he hears "slick" attached, like a fungus, to his name. He should. He knows what he's done.

In the March 19 *Wall Street Journal*, David Shribman reported that "in 1983 Mr. Clinton worked for the legislature's support in raising the sales tax to 4 per cent from 3 per cent. The Arkansas Fairness Council, a coalition of labor groups, blacks, women's organizations, and others, asked him to exempt food from the sales tax. He refused. The coalition then suggested a rebate for low-income tax payers, which Mr. Clinton accepted so as to get the penny increase through the House.

Meredith Oakley, associate editor of the *Arkansas Democrat*, says of Bill Clinton: "His word is dirt."

"But when the legislation got to the Senate, Mr. Clinton reneged on his agreement, the group contends. 'We counted on him,' says Brownie Ledbetter, president of the council. 'We stood there and watched while he broke his word. It happened whiz-bang.' "

And J. Bill Becker, president of the AFL-CIO of Arkansas, told Shribman: "I have never dealt with a governor like that. He's your friend, but when you go to the legislature, you get no help at all. People call him Slick Willie because he will tell people what they want to hear and then evade and avoid and explain away."

When Clinton announced that he was going to run for the presidency, Meredith Oakley, the associate editor of the *Arkansas Democrat*, started a column on that celebratory day by saying of Bill Clinton: "His word is dirt."

There'll be more next week about the most repellent major presidential candidate I have seen since Richard Nixon ran against the Bill of Rights in 1968. (Recent Supreme Court decisions, said Nixon, had "weakened law and encouraged criminals.") But at least Nixon never pretended to give a damn about unconstitutional searches and seizures, nor had he ever opposed secret FBI surveillance of people exercising their First Amendment rights. Nixon was disgusting, but he was not in Slick Willie's class as a hypocrite, an authentic whited sepulchur.

Yet, throughout this city, some of our beacons of civil liberties and economic justice—including labor leaders!—are embracing Willie Slick.

It is time to be realistic, we are told, so that we can, at last, elect a Democratic president. Above all else, what stays in my mind is Rickey Ray Rector, a man whose brain was so shattered that he didn't know what was going on at his trial. Willie executed him during the primaries to show that not all Democrats are wimps on crime.

I've voted for people I had little use for, but never for someone I despised. And I'm not going to this time. ■

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Candidate's Record

Policies Under Clinton Are a Boon to Industry

By JEFF GERTH
Special to The New York Times

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — Under Gov. Bill Clinton, Arkansas has grown to be a business-friendly state. The Governor entices corporations with tax breaks, low wages and a warm, cooperative attitude. All this has helped add jobs, increase income tax revenue and provide much of the money spent on efforts to improve public schools.

But in some cases industry has used state government concessions while eliminating jobs.

The International Paper Company is one believer in Mr. Clinton's Arkansas. In 1985, at the Governor's urging, the state created a special investment tax credit act at the company's request. Both the state government and the company said the act led to thousands of construction jobs; the company said it helped save at least 1,000 jobs at one International Paper mill and increased jobs at another mill — to 1,401 jobs today from 1,058 in 1985.

Modernization Pays Off

Charlie Ventress Jr. of Moscow, Ark., is being paid $18.56 an hour to coat magazine paper manufactured at the company's modernized complex in Pine Bluff. The plant was modernized as a direct result of the 1985 act, which gives manufacturers a tax credit for new investments.

"I'm glad that Arkansas got the plant," he said. "Before they put the plant in, I got a demotion and a lot of people were laid off. It made me feel

tax credit several years ago, Mr. Goggans said, "it was rubber-stamped; no one ever looked at whether we did what we said we would do." In the end, he said, the investment was for "modernization that actually lost jobs."

A spokeswoman for Georgia Pacific acknowledged that the tax credits had led to a decrease in the number of jobs, from 146 employees to 123 at one Arkansas mill modernized under the act. But she also noted that the opposite had been true at another mill.

The investment credit law does not require companies to create jobs to be eligible for the benefit. Mr. Goggans, who was a member of Mr. Clinton's tax reform commission, said he had tried unsuccessfully to persuade the Governor to change that.

To attract business, Arkansas, with Mr. Clinton's support, introduced the investment tax credit and other special tax breaks, like exemptions from sales taxes for a wide range of business activities. In part, Arkansas has had to do this to compete with other states that are also aggressively competing for jobs. As a result of the tax breaks, overall job growth in Arkansas in the last decade has been robust. But there is a price, which Mr. Clinton has said he is willing to pay.

Growth of Sales Taxes

State data show that business tax preferences, especially sales tax exemptions, cost the state at least $400 million a year — almost 20 percent of the state's total revenues. As an apparent result of that and some other factors, in the last decade Arkansas has had to rely increasingly on sales taxes to balance its budget.

Sales and personal income taxes have grown more than twice as fast as

chases costing more than that. Last year, as part of a tax package intended to raise teachers' salaries, the state raised the general sales tax from 4 percent to 4.5 percent and broadened it to apply to used car sales.

Regressive New Taxes

"I'm looking for something so I don't

Alan S. Weiner for The New York Times

In 1985, with Gov. Bill Clinton's backing, Arkansas created a special investment tax credit act at the urging of the International Paper Company. Today, Charlie Ventress Jr. of Moscow, Ark., is paid $18.56 an hour at an International Paper complex built in Pine Bluff as a result of the 1985 act. "I'm glad that Arkansas got the plant," he said. "It made me feel secure about making a living for my family."

Clinton as Governor

12 Years at Arkansas's Helm

Third of five articles.

Businesses in Arkansas take benefits, but some cut jobs

manufacturing positions, particularly in food processing, one of the state's biggest industries.

The most frequent source of wealth for the state's richest citizens, according to a recent cover story in the monthly magazine Arkansas Times, is the poultry industry. The Tyson family

created jobs.

Enterprise zone tax credit regulations were eventually tightened, restricting eligibility. But the Clinton administration did not eliminate any corporate tax preferences.

Legislative Impediment

plant," he said. "Before they put the plant in, I got a demotion and a lot of people were laid off. It made me feel secure about making a living for my family."

Mr. Ventress is just one of several thousand people in Arkansas who benefited from Governor Clinton's industrial policies, which have brought a job creation rate that is far higher than the national average, especially in the state's large industries like poultry processing and paper.

But Howard Goggans, a retired plant controller for the Georgia-Pacific Corporation, another large paper company in Arkansas that also took advantage of the investment credits, considers them corporate welfare subsidies. Unlike nearby states, Mr. Goggans says, Arkansas loosely structures and enforces the tax credits, enabling companies not only to pay less in taxes, but also to eliminate jobs.

'Rubber-Stamped' Tax Credit

When his own company asked for state approval of a multimillion-dollar

to balance its budget.

Sales and personal income taxes have grown more than twice as fast as corporate tax revenue. The shift is regressive because sales taxes most affect those least able to pay: lower- and middle-income taxpayers. And Arkansas has more than its share of those.

The state's average tax rate is the 42d lowest in the nation. But Citizens for Tax Justice, a public interest group in Washington, says those taxes hit poor families harder than wealthy families by a ratio of 1.7 to 1. That ratio, which has worsened in the years Mr. Clinton has been Governor, is about equal to the national average, as shown in the group's study.

Rodney Burrell, a 25-year-old father of two who earns about $10,000 a year, says the state's tax policy hits people like him the hardest.

Mr. Burrell was trying to buy a used car in North Little Rock recently, hoping to find one that cost less than $2,000 so he could avoid a new sales tax that has been imposed on used car pur-

Regressive New Taxes

"I'm looking for something so I don't have to pay the tax," Mr. Burrell said, adding that the tax "hurts the people who can't afford it the most."

Those new taxes are regressive. But any evaluaton of Mr. Clinton's record must take into account a clear impediment he faces as Governor: Under the Arkansas Constitution, any increase in the income tax must be approved by three-fourths of the Arkansas Legislature. That leaves the state government little choice but to raise other taxes.

Improving education has been a high priority for Mr. Clinton. Those are the chief reasons he has added or raised a variety of taxes since taking office, including taxes on cigarettes, insurance premiums and gasoline. But a clear side effect has been to reinforce a longstanding distortion in the distribution of wealth.

Donald R. Market, director of the Arkansas Business and Economic Review at the University of Arkansas, likes to describe the state as "sort of

some cut jobs.

like a developing nation." He noted its persistently higher-than-average unemployment rate and cited figures showing that 75 percent of the state's households earn less than $35,000, compared to 61 percent of households nationwide.

The Dominance of Industry

But he, like many other people in the state, does not blame Mr. Clinton for failing to turn this around. "I don't know if a Bill Clinton or any other governor can turn a poor state into a rich one," he said.

Still, Brownie Ledbetter, president of the Arkansas Fairness Council, a coalition of consumer and labor groups, says industry has such political and economic dominance in the state that it is no wonder the gap between the state's rich and poor remains.

"We've been dominated by corporate folks, politically and economically, since we've been a territory," she said. "We don't have much of a middle class left."

The leaders of the poultry, paper, trucking, energy and financial services industries, among others, have been highly influential members of the state's political establishment for many years. But rather than discussing that, state officials prefer to talk about the job growth rate.

"We had a 3 percent growth rate last year, ranking fifth in the nation, and we were ranked eighth for the year before that," said Joe LaFace, an economist with the Arkansas Department of Finance and Adminstration.

Lower Cost of Living

Mr. LaFace says the figures showing the state's low per capita income are misleading because they are not adjusted for its lower cost of living.

Mr. Market agreed; he estimated that the income gap between Arkansas and other states would be "narrowed but not eliminated" after taking that into account.

Mr. LaFace says the 200,000-plus jobs added over the last decade include a higher than normal concentration of

monthly magazine Arkansas Times, is the poultry industry. The Tyson family has grown rich from that.

John Tyson, vice chairman of Tyson Foods Inc., the nation's largest poultry-processing company, said his company added 15,000 workers in the last 12 years, from 6,000 in 1980 to 21,000 today.

Business Tax Breaks

The company and its officials have long been financicial backers of Mr. Clinton, and have allowed him to use the company airplane numerous times at no charge, public records show.

State officials say the poultry and feed industry has thrived because of sales tax exemptions, investment credits and extremely low severance taxes on natural gas.

Still, three years ago a tax reform commission appointed by the Governor recommended eliminating some of the business tax breaks, including the 1985 investment credit. The commission said there was too little accountability and not enough assurance that the tax credits were actually used in ways that

Legislative Impediment

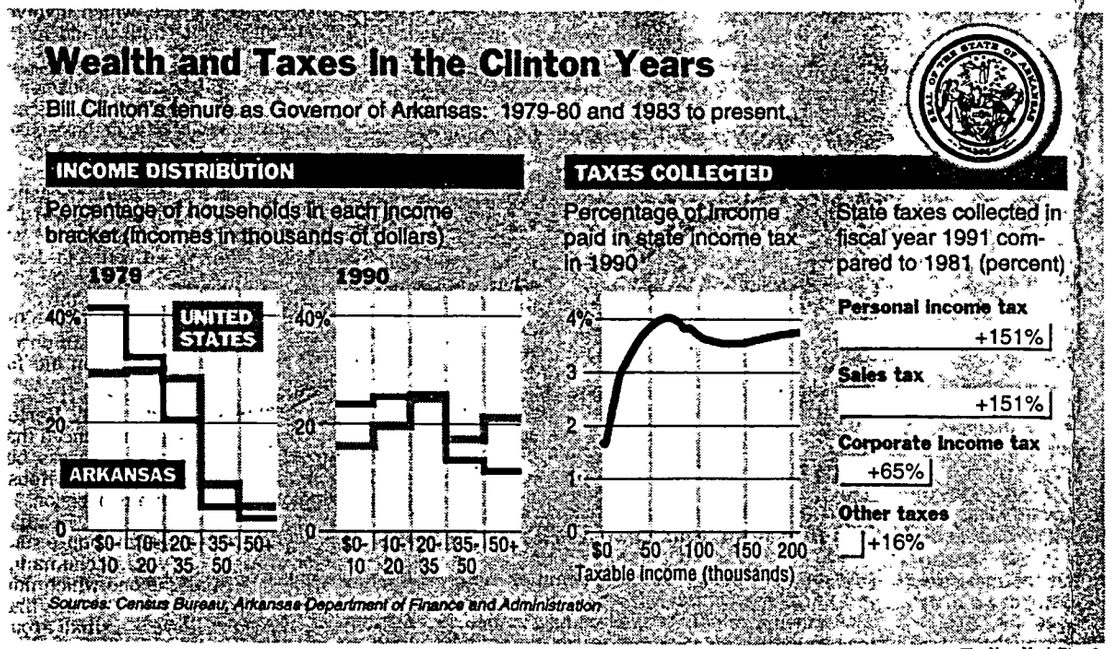
Mr. Clinton has argued that eliminating the preferences would do more harm than good. And Timothy J. Leathers, the state's revenue commissioner, says the Governor has been unable to raise other taxes, such as a severance tax on natural gas, because the Legislature would not agree.

Officials in the Governor's office also say they have been unable to get the state's voters to approve any change in the constitutional requirement for a three-quarters majority in the Legislature for an income tax increase.

Others, like Ms. Ledbetter and Mr. Goggans, contend that Mr. Clinton has not tried hard enough to overcome that requirement.

Ms. Ledbetter describes herself as a longtime supporter of Mr. Clinton, but she said he "hasn't been willing to use his political capital" for that, though "other governors have done that, have been willing to take it on."

NEXT: Race relations in Arkansas.



Clinton's Record in Arkansas Is Uneven on Health Issues

By B. DRUMMOND AYRES Jr.
Special to The New York Times

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — When Gov. Bill Clinton says he has faced many uphill struggles to improve life for his constituents here, none has been more daunting than trying to improve health care.

Arkansas, one of the nation's poorest states, has some of the country's most serious health problems: above-average rates of disease and death, shortages of doctors and hospitals and inadequate insurance coverage.

As in most states, health-care problems are largely left to the Federal Government or to hospitals and insurance companies. The occasional steps that Governor Clinton has taken into the field provide few solid clues about how he might handle this vast, difficult problem on the national level.

Mr. Clinton has tried to expand health insurance coverage, perhaps the major health issue in Arkansas and the nation. But his effort bears little resemblance to his Presidential campaign pledge of a "play or pay" program that would force employers to insure their workers or pay a special tax into a fund that would provide Government coverage. He never pushed a "pay or play" plan in Arkansas.

Low National Rankings

Though Arkansas residents have higher-than-average rates of illness and death, one in four Arkansans has no health insurance, compared to only one in seven Americans nationally. Over all, Arkansas ranks 46th in health insurance coverage and 40th in the level of Medicaid care that the state, in combination with the Federal Government, is willing to finance.

Last year, in an effort to expand insured medical coverage, Mr. Clinton supported lawmakers in their success-

Foreign Policy

Turning His Sights Overseas, Clinton Sees a Problem at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue

By THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

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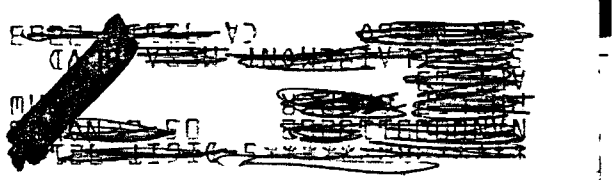

EDITORIAL

RIGHT TO KNOW PEROT

Now that's service. Usually when one requests material from the State Department under the Freedom of Information Act, it takes years for Foggy Bottom to dredge up the relevant documents. But when a reporter for Hearst newspapers last month asked for material regarding Bill Clinton's travels abroad while he was a college student—as well as documents on his draft status and citizenship—the bureaucrats at State jumped to comply. An assistant secretary of state, a political appointee, called the U.S. Embassy in London and ordered it to conduct an "extremely thorough" search. Reportedly nothing compromising was found.

Every F.O.I.A. request should receive such high-level attention, including the one filed this past June by *The Nation* for materials on Ross Perot. We asked the C.I.A., the State Department, the Justice Department and the Pentagon for any records they possessed on the billionaire candidate—and we asked that the request be expedited. The need for speed was obvious: Perot was—and is again—running for the highest office; voters should know as much as possible about him.

By the time the first presidential debate rolled around, however, none of the agencies had released a single document. The C.I.A. told us that it expedites F.O.I.A. requests "only in those rare instances where health and/or humanitarian considerations create circumstances of exceptional urgency and extraordinary need. Your request clearly fails to meet these criteria." Langley also apparently believes that informing the voters is not reason enough. It said it would place the Perot request at the bottom of its list. In other words, see you in two or three years.

On October 14, *The Nation* filed a lawsuit asking the district court of Washington, D.C., to compel these government agencies to process our request "on an expedited basis." Admittedly, it looks like

(*Continued on Page 491*)

THOMAS AT YALE
Andrew L. Shapiro

MONEY VOTES
Marty Jezer
Randy Kehler

DU PONT'S POST-BHOPAL BLUES
Mark Schapiro

A.F.L.-C.I.O. IN UKRAINE
Lewis H. Siegelbaum
Daniel Walkowitz

FUZZY NORM
William M. Arkin

PRIESTLY PEDOPHILES
Thomas M. Disch

THE EXECUTIONER'S SONG

CLINTON, LABOR AND FREE TRADE

ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Early in 1979, midway through the Carter Administration, Jim Ridgeway and I walked into the offices of Bill Winpisinger, president of the machinists union. We were preparing an article on how labor felt after two years of a Democrat in the White House. We switched on the tape recorder and asked Winpisinger, "Is there any way the President can redeem himself in your eyes?"

"Yes, there's one way he can do it," he replied.

"What's that?"

"Die."

Then he listed the pledges Carter had made to labor in 1976, and all the betrayals that had followed.

I've been remembering that exchange a good deal lately. In these days winding down toward the polling on November 3 people on the left are drawing their bottom line on the Governor of Arkansas. For some the decisive issue is appointments to the federal judiciary, now 80 percent saturated with Reagan/Bush judges. For others, it is abortion or gay issues. But where Bill Clinton's career and the larger historical agenda most momentously intersect is on the terrain of labor.

America is on the edge of a free trade agreement with Mexico, following an earlier one with Canada. With democratic procedures and sovereignty annulled, workers in all three countries will be locked into a downward spiral of low-wage, low-skill jobs, with uninhibited movement of capital and a ratcheting down of social welfare provisions and environmental standards.

Not a few voters will, in their solitary communion with the future in the voting booth, no

(*Continued on Page 506*)

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rank and file, the structure and even the programs of the old "reformed" unions with those of the new independent unions, one discerns precious little difference. To be sure, in terms of democratic credentials, the old union apparatus—now reformed into a Confederation of Free Trade Unions—leaves a lot to be desired. But then, judging from the tactics that have been employed in Ukraine, so does the A.F.L.-C.I.O. When we reiterated Karatnycky's position to the Donetsk strike committee leaders, Krylov smiled and replied, "Adrian Karatnycky is no democrat."

What this suggests for the American left is the need to develop a political alternative to the new missionaries and entrepreneurs now swarming into Russia and other successor states. Like nature, politics—whether trade union or any other kind—abhors a vacuum, and at the moment it is the forces of the right who are hard at work trying to fill it by preaching their version of democracy abroad. But bribery, quid pro quos and the big stick do not make democracy. There are, after all, contesting visions of democracy among rank-and-file insurgents struggling within the American trade union movement. It is up to left activists to support a comparable democratic alternative for working people in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union that respects these peoples' own agendas. □

Clinton and Labor

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

doubt cheer themselves up with the thought that Clinton has thus far been cramped by the constraints of a backward conservative state. On the national stage, perhaps he will lift his eyes to higher things.

But it's an illusion to think of "right to work" states like Arkansas as underdeveloped in terms of plant and infrastructure, thus forced to exercise their "comparative advantage" of cheap human labor. Many factories in the Deep South are state of the art, backed by physical and political infrastructure servile to business. The function of states like Arkansas has been to maintain that bludgeon of a low-cost nonunion work force over the labor movement in the northern tiers. And as we stand on the threshold of NAFTA, Arkansas represents not the past but the future. From the point of view of capital, Governor Clinton has spent his political life thus far in the proper rehearsal room.

"Right to work" laws, sanctioned under Section 14b of the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, make it legal for states to prohibit the payment of dues from being a condition of employment in union shops—thus, individuals have the "right" to work and accumulate benefits won through collective bargaining without having to join the union or contribute in any way to servicing the cost of those benefits. Besides weakening the union financially and splitting the work force, such laws virtually guarantee against the possibility of a successful strike.

Last year Jim Stanford (for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in Ottawa) studied the wage differentials between Canada and low-income regions of the United States, differentials that have prompted Canadian manufacturers to relocate below the border. He found that "right to work" laws reduced wages in the U.S. southeastern tier by at least $1.45 an hour—in effect, extracting from workers an involuntary subsidy to employers. In the Deep South, Stanford calculates this subsidy amounts to 15 percent of wage costs.

Today, Clinton says that as President he would support repeal of Section 14b. He speaks endlessly of high-paying, high-skill jobs, and vows to work with Congress to amend the free trade agreement if adverse effects on U.S. workers and the environment can be demonstrated.

What does his history in Arkansas tell us? If you phone the office of Bill Becker, head of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. in Arkansas, all questions about Clinton's labor record are treated with suspicion. When my colleague Billy Treger called to discuss an internal memorandum on Clinton drawn up by Becker, probably sometime late last year, he was immediately referred to the national office in Washington. There Rex Hardesty, director of information, called the damning report "old stuff," "inoperative." "Now," he said, "it's a whole new ball game."

Becker's memo details a repeated sequence of betrayals by Clinton despite almost consistent support from labor in his Arkansas races over sixteen years. Back in the dawn of his career, in 1974, Clinton sweet-talked the state A.F.L.-C.I.O. into endorsing him for the Democratic nomination in a Congressional race, over a state senator with a pro-labor record. He got nowhere in that race but two years later, in his successful bid to be state attorney general, he gave labor the finger on their bottom-line issue. The state A.F.L.-C.I.O. was circulating a petition to put a "rights of labor" initiative on the ballot that would have allowed union shops when members of a local union voted for it and management also agreed. Clinton announced, "I don't think it will pass, and I so far have very serious reservations about it," and claimed friends in the labor movement told him "it's the wrong time to bring it up."

Clinton lost labor's endorsement then, but he had it again for his first run for Governor in 1978, repaying the favor by coming out against exemption of food and prescription medicine from the sales tax. In his first term he supported an increase in the gas tax, raised taxes on motor vehicles and supported a constitutional amendment to give tax breaks to utilities. As the years progressed, he gave more tax breaks to business while raising regressive taxes, sold out on pledges to improve the workers' compensation process and to push "right to know" legislation on toxic substances.

By 1986, Becker was telling *The Wall Street Journal* that "almost any [Clinton] activity, in so far as our folks are concerned, is reminiscent of what Reagan is doing to us."

Perhaps the most telling incident took place in 1990, when Morrilton Plastics faced a strike by employees belonging to the U.A.W. After Clinton's intervention, the Arkansas Industrial Development Commission (busy advertising the state's "right to work" allurements) gave the company a $300,000 loan guarantee to help the company build up inventory against the expected strike. Becker himself then delivered the famous judgment that the A.F.L.-C.I.O. would now prefer to forget: "This guy will pat you on the back and piss down your leg." Nothing, in other words, that Clinton now says to reassure labor about amending NAFTA can be believed.

The issue of jobs, high-paying or minimum wage, here or gone south, is no longer one that can be separated from environmental questions. With the approach of NAFTA, these environmental issues are more germane than ever, as business calls for a leveling of regulations in the name of competition. Consider Clinton's behavior regarding the dioxin waste dump in Jacksonville, an Arkansas community of 29,000 people where for more than forty years three companies manufactured toxic chemicals, including about 25 percent of the Agent Orange dumped on Vietnam. Dioxin in Jacksonville soil is well above the level that caused evacuation of Times Beach, Missouri. Contractors at the old Vertac Chemical Corporation site, which holds 29,000 drums of dioxin, got a license this year to burn its unsalable surplus.

Mortality from cancer is high in Jacksonville. "We consider Jacksonville a national sacrifice zone," Gary Cohen of the National Toxics Campaign Fund told me recently. "It's the one significant place in the country where the exposures to dioxin are equal to, and exceed, those of Vietnam War veterans." Cohen and his colleagues urged Clinton to prevent the incineration of the waste and to evaluate the neighborhood with a view to potential buyout. This was in 1989-90. "He always avoided us," Cohen now says.

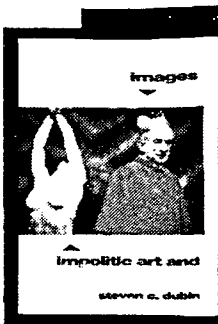
In June of this year the Toxics Campaign tried to create a political stir around the release of *Inconclusive by Design*, an excellent survey of waste, fraud and abuse in federal environmental research. The fund had been working with House majority leader Richard Gephardt for two years on legislation to improve the accountability of government agencies, and Gephardt was to attend a press conference called by the organization. Also scheduled to be there was Jeff Shelton, a working man from Jacksonville whose baby, Joseph, had died at ten weeks, with post-mortem tests showing a huge amount of dioxin in his body.

Gephardt's people (their boss was supposedly on Clinton's short list for V.P.) worried that Shelton would use the press conference to blast Clinton for his do-nothing stance, and asked the fund not to let Shelton speak. This the fund refused to do, though they reassured Gephardt's office that the event would not be a bash-Clinton fest.

"In the end," Cohen recalls, "not only did Gephardt back out but Clinton suddenly decided to have a press conference right down the hall, at the same time—11 A.M.—on the same day—June 30. So our message was lost." Study of the network transcripts for June 30 and newspapers for July 1 show that Clinton had nothing much on his mind to justify a press conference, beyond making sure no one heard Jeff Shelton.

"The choice," Cohen concluded, "is between the free-market corporate takeover of democracy, which is represented by the Republican Administration, and the free-market corporate takeover of the environment, with the possibility of a democratic resistance movement making some inroads into policy decisions." First on his agenda would be scrapping NAFTA and renegotiating it around meaningful environmental and labor standards. "If it wasn't for Gore," Cohen said, "it would be hard for environmentalists to support Clinton."

Gore, who hails from Tennessee, is roundly applauded by the environmental establishment for his votes on such legisla-



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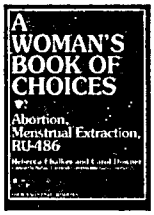

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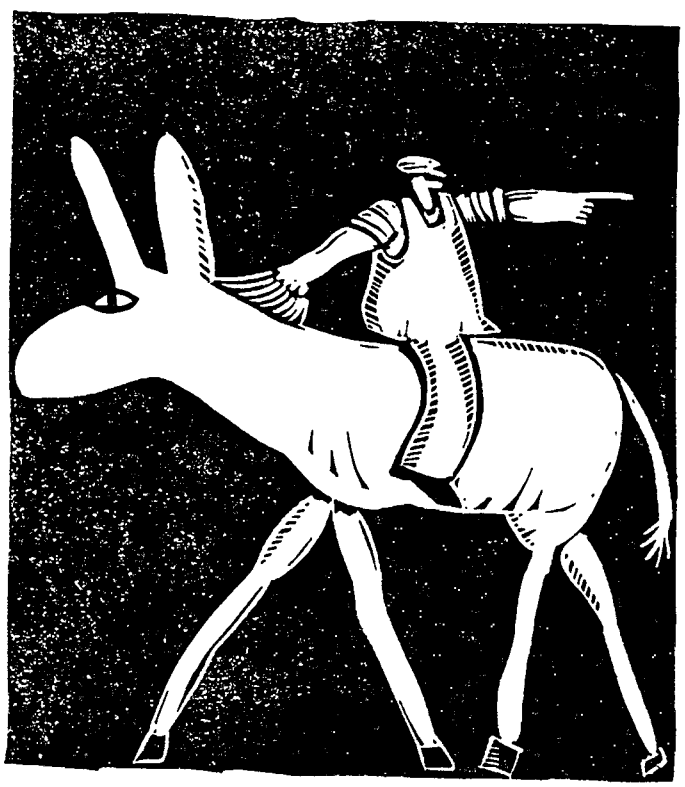
tion as the Clean Air Act of 1990. This past May the key neoliberal innovation of that act went into play when the Tennessee Valley Authority bought an estimated $2.5 million worth of "pollution credits" from Wisconsin Power and Light, which didn't need them. This credit allows the T.V.A. to exceed its limit of sulfur dioxide and other toxic emissions. As Benjamin Goldman shows in *The Truth About Where You Live*, among those on the receiving end, Shelby County, Tennessee, ranks twenty-second among all counties in the country for excess deaths from lung cancer. Sheboygan County, Wisconsin, ranks twenty-eighth from the bottom in the same category—an almost perfect reverse, mirroring the transfer of poisons from north to south, comfortable to poor, white to minority, that is also one of the features of the free trade agreement.

In essentials Bush and Clinton are in cordial assent on the trade agreement, the fundamental economic issue of this election. Global economic integration favors elites at the expense of majorities in both industrial and developing countries. As Herman Daly and Robert Goodland, from the environmental department of the World Bank, put it in a fine paper on the consequences of free trade (written in a purely personal capacity), "Northern capitalists want Northern laborers to compete directly with Southern laborers. International capital mobility, coupled with free trade of products, stimulates a standards-lowering competition to attract capital: wages can be lowered, as can health insurance, worker safety standards, environmental standards, etc."

Clinton has been denouncing the Bush Administration for permitting the A.I.D. scandal in which taxpayers finance the export of U.S. jobs to low-cost, terrorized labor in Central America [see "Beat the Devil," October 12]. But he still defends NAFTA, saying it will increase U.S. exports. Many of these "exports" are a statistical sham—commodities sent south for cheap processing and then sent north again. Clinton's supposedly high-wage, high-skill, high-productivity jobs have also been migrating south. Three-quarters of the new manufacturing jobs in Mexico—created by U.S. corporations—are in the field of auto and electronics, respectively capital intensive and high tech, precisely the jobs Clinton predicts will stay north to take advantage of his infrastructure rehab and retraining. Mexican productivity in these fields is rising rapidly, a large incentive for manufacturers to go south.



Middle-class folk, many of them comfortably reposing in jobs that cannot be moved south, might feel that U.S. and Canadian workers should be willing to sacrifice their higher-paid jobs so that lower-paid workers south of the border might thrive. But since integration began in 1982, Mexican real wages have dropped by 40 percent. Employment has swollen in the *maquiladoras* but shrunken in older sectors. As many as 15 million Mexicans could be thrown off the land by the year 2000 as a result of capital-intensive agribusiness and imports of cheaper corn from the United States and Canada.

We live in a neomercantilist era, but this doesn't mean that labor has to accept its premises or its practices. It's a class thing. The better-off do well out of free trade and the rest don't. Neither does the environment, because under present terms, business can always externalize its environmental costs. Not every country can surge with export-led growth. World exports must match world aggregate imports. There is, in sum, nothing wrong with basic self-sufficiency, as Keynes once pointed out. Trade is not a plus in and of itself, except to the neomercantilist factions now dominant in world affairs.

Nowhere is the economic future bodied forth by both Clinton and Bush better expressed than in the story of one of America's supposedly more enlightened firms, whose chairman and C.E.O., Robert Haas, is among Business Leaders for Clinton.

On January 16, 1990, 1,150 textile workers at the Levi Strauss plant on South Zarzamora Street in San Antonio were told that the plant was closing. The first group of about 300 workers were to clear out that afternoon; within three months the rest would be on the street. The Zarzamora plant, which had had record profits in 1989 and which overwhelmingly employed Mexican-American women, was Levi's largest operation in Texas; its closing was the last in a series of at least twenty-six Levi plant closures nationwide since 1985.

The company moved its Zarzamora operation to Costa Rica, where it now benefits from reduced U.S. import tariffs on goods re-entering the country. Conditions at Zarzamora were broadly familiar: nonunion low-wage workers (one woman employed for eighteen years was earning an average of $5.24 an hour), paid on a piecework basis, performing repetitive actions at high speeds (at the time of the shutdown, at least 10 percent of the workers suffered from carpal tunnel syndrome) and deterred from reporting injuries for fear of being assigned to slower, lower-paying jobs.

"Our sense is we do more than anyone in our industry and more than almost anyone in American industry," a Levi spokesman said later. This may be true. Levi paid severance—one week for every year worked. But in October of 1989, even as managers assured worried workers the plant would stay open,

its engineers went around to every sewing machine and added a task that slowed down the operators and thus lowered their pay. When it came time for calculating severance pay, the rate was set on the basis of the average from October to December, reflecting the lower amount after the machines were jigged.

The company claims it has paid out more than $1 million for retraining, education, social services and emergency assistance. But $770,104 of that came as general charitable payments in San Antonio stretching back more than two years before the plant closed. As you might expect from the neoliberal pact between business and government, volunteer organizations are left to pick up the pieces (Clinton's basic reaction to the L.A. riots). The city of San Antonio, which lost 10,000 jobs in 1990, received $468,000 for general support services. Even then, an officer of the Department of Economic and Education Development said it was "a drop in the bucket." Money for tuition, books and other materials for retraining came through federal programs. Not all the workers were eligible for these classes, which in any case were conducted only in English—a problem for the Levi workers, 90 percent of whom spoke only Spanish. As for training for "high-skill, good-wage" jobs—Clinton's mantra—only thirty-five of the workers were able, with federal assistance, to attend college. Most of the others languished in English and high-school equivalency classes, prerequisites for retraining. "The few that received retraining, such as cosmetology people," Fuerza Unida, the laid-off workers' organization, reports, "were put to work cleaning the floors and bathrooms. When they completed their training, they had not learned what they needed." About 700 have found some sort of work, most at lower pay.

Every Thanksgiving the women stage a hunger strike in front of the Levi Strauss headquarters in San Francisco. Fuerza Unida (1305 N. Flores, San Antonio, TX 78212) is suing Levi and calls for a boycott and other actions.

How has labor reacted to the Clinton candidacy and imminence of a Clinton presidency? As brokered between A.F.L. leaders and the Clinton campaign, the labor agenda has a familiar look to it: repeal of Section 14b, legislation banning permanent replacement of strikers, a chemical "right to know" law, vigorous enforcement of worker safety regulations and moderate social positions already endorsed by Clinton. Clinton also says he'll restore balance at the N.L.R.B., peg the minimum wage to inflation and enforce the Davis-Bacon Act protecting wages in the construction trades.

"Are we creating a false impression here that Clinton is advancing the agenda of working people?" Jerry Tucker, who heads the New Directions movement within the U.A.W., asks. "This is a vintage A.F.L.-C.I.O. list which leaves all sorts of fluidity for the candidate to move back and forth on."

What's not on the A.F.L.'s wish list? Most strikingly, labor law reform, other than 14b and the antiscab bill. Right now there are tremendous obstacles to organizing. And as long as striking workers can be replaced at all, and given high unemployment and recession, the strike is a blunted weapon. What's more, the A.F.L. doesn't challenge Clinton to tip the economic environment in favor of workers.

In the section on NAFTA, there's nothing on domestic content legislation. Both Mexico and Canada have such legislation, and Canada is now pressing for it to be more stringent.

On health care, the A.F.L. endorses the "realistic" approach, also Clinton's, that has split the ranks of labor on this issue. As Robert Wages, president of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, puts it, "We're being asked to support the health reform alternative being pushed by Democratic Party leaders (the 'pay-or-play' option), which is nothing but a freshly painted-over version of Richard Nixon's proposal from the early 1970s. . . . Pay-or-play keeps the private insurance industry at the heart of the system to the tune of $70 billion a year. Pay-or-play keeps our access to medical care tied to employment, which we lose in a strike, when we get laid off or when we move from job to job."

Could labor have played a stronger hand with Clinton? "I certainly believe," Tucker said to my associate JoAnn Wypijewski, "that the industrial labor unions specifically were in a position to push a stronger agenda and expect to have more concessions made to us. Instead, you had the Gephardts acting as agents and interpreters behind the scenes saying, Trust us, he'll do the right things in office. The national unions have a tendency not to imagine the President is accountable to working people but accountable to them.

"Industrial unions should be mapping a program to tell Clinton what we want. And then we should take that agenda to the grass roots. At this point the national unions don't have that kind of relationship with the grass roots. We should say to the grass roots, Don't be fooled, and we should say to the Democrats, This is what we expect of a Democratic Congress and a Democratic President. But we should also be more aggressive in exploring a third force. And we should do it openly, to offer a political threat to the incumbent President. The U.S. is the only one of the three countries in the North American Free Trade Agreement without a political vehicle representing the rights and interests of the working people. We need such a vehicle; it would be important in linking up strategically with counterparts in Mexico and Canada."

One of the reasons the U.S. labor movement has been slow to turn to the grass roots to organize pressure to tear up the free trade agreement as negotiated is that many unions thought it of little concern to them. The public service unions, the teachers, didn't fear their jobs trickling south, and so AFSCME and the A.F.T. were among Clinton's earliest supporters. Construction unions were similarly indifferent.

But the free trade agreement will erode the tax base of cities across the country, lower growth, shrink budgets. It threatens every worker, every union, in the United States. And unless it leads the kind of oppositional force invoked by Tucker, labor will suffer under Clinton as surely as under Bush, and will, in two or three years, no doubt wish for him the same fate that Winpisinger wished for Carter back in 1979. □

Additional sources used in this discussion of NAFTA include papers by Jeff Faux and Thea Lee, and by Robert Blecker and William Spriggs, from the Economic Policy Institute in Washington; an article by Tim Koechlin and Mehrene Larudee, in the September/October issue of *Challenge*; and a booklet by Kim Moody and Mary McGinn from *Labor Notes* in Detroit.